## HABITAT

Yakut settlements occupy almost the whole of northeastern Siberia. 131
Their territory extends eastward from the Lena to the Kolyma River for about 2000 miles and from the Arctic Sea to its southern limits about 1056 miles. Other tribes are settled or roam within these boundaries and Yakut villages are encountered beyond the area indicated, as will be seen below (Fig. 107). According to Strelbitsky[1] Yakutsk Province occupies an area of 1,533,255 square miles (3,489,689 square versts).

### Physical Geography of Yakutsk Province

Yakutsk Province was formerly divided into five districts: Olek- 631
minsk, Yakutsk, Viliuisk, Verkhoyansk, and Kolymsk. Two new districts have recently been established by the Soviet Government: the mountainous country on the upper course of the Aldan River, a tributary of the Lena, rich in gold, was designated as a separate district named Aldan, and a part of the Verkhoyansk District, the valley of the lower Lena River, rich in fish and peltry, was named Bulun.[1] But, to avoid confusion in describing the physical features of different localities, I shall employ the former nomenclature.

Both northern districts, Verkhoyansk and Kolymsk, which I 114
traversed in different directions will be reviewed. The route between Yakutsk and Sredne Kolymsk, through Verkhoyansk and over the Verkhoyansk Ridge, was covered four times, twice (1895, 1897) from west to east and twice (1888, 1902) in the opposite direction. The eastward and westward journeys were made in winter on dog and reindeer sledges. One trip from east to west was accomplished during the summer on horseback. During the winter of 1897 I traveled over the tundra on reindeer sledges from the Kolyma River to Bulun on the Lena River. At some points I touched the seacoast, as at the mouth of the Khroma River. I also made some side trips, visiting the Yakut settlements on Lake Senkel and the Soldatovo River; I went from the Yakut settlement, Alayikha, on the Indighirka River, to the Russian settlement, Russkoye Ustye, at the mouth of the same river; from Bulun to the islands at the mouth of the Lena River; from Nishne Kolymsk to the mountainous region of the Big and Small Anui rivers, tributaries of the Kolyma; from Verkhne Kolymsk to the Yassachnaya, Nelemnaya, and Korkodon rivers. I visited the last three rivers three times (1896, 1897) going twice from Verkhoyansk and once (1902) from the shores of the

[1]Strelbitsky, I. A., *The Calculation of the Surface of the Russian Empire*, 1874. In Russian.



1[Cf. statement on p. 74, category 116, which indicates that Bulun was formerly part of the Viliuisk district--ANALYST]

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902)1933 RV2 Yakut RV2
HISTORICAL SIBERIA RR2



HS 175 Y 175

forties of the seventeenth century the Yakutsk Cossacks continued the discoveries of their predecessors on the shores of the Polar Sea and reached the Alaseya and Kolyma rivers. When the first attempts to proceed from the mouth of Kolyma farther to the east and to double the Chukchee Cape by sea failed, they went by land over the mountains, reached the Anadyr River, and from there Penshina Bay on the Okhotsk Sea.

HS 175 669 Y 175

In 1697–1698 the military expedition of Atlassov discovered the route to Kamchatka, but the final conquest of this country took place only after the suppression of the Kamchadal revolt in 1731. The conquest of the Chukchee country was not attempted by the Russians until the first half of the eighteenth century. At first the Chukchee not only successfully defended themselves, but at times took the offensive. In fact the Chukchee were not subjected to Russian rule until 1869.

In a southerly direction from Yakutsk Fortress the subjection of the Buryat on the upper course of the Lena was undertaken. These attempts met the stubborn resistance of the Mongols. However, with the foundation of the Verkholensk Fortress, the Russians began to dominate that country and soon the Cossacks, in their search for new lands, reached the shores of the Baikal Sea.

After the foundation of Yakutsk, attempts were made to proceed in a southeastern direction into the Amur Valley. But when the Nerchinsk Fortress was established by the Cossacks, the movement into the Amur Region from Yakutsk was halted.

HS 631 175 Y 631 175

The boundaries of the Lena District subject to the Yakut governors (*voyevodas*) in the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century may be generally defined as follows. They included the territories of the middle and lower courses of the Lena River and the whole country to the northeast of the Lena: to the north as far as the Polar Sea, to the east to the Pacific Ocean and Kamchatka (inclusive), and in a southeastern direction they reached the Dshugahur Mountain Ridge. The Lena District comprised the Chichniskoye and Olekminskoye Fortresses and the following settlements: Kharsinskoye, Ust-Potomskoye, Maiskoye, Tontorskoye, Sutalskoye, three Viliuiskiya, Shiganskoye and Olenskoye and the "distant" rivers: Yana with two settlements, Indighirka with three settlements, Alaseya with one settlement, Kolyma with three settlements, Anadyr with one settlement and, finally, the Okhotsk Fortress on the shore of the Okhotsk Sea.

The territory comprising the Yakutsk District was later subjected to numerous changes in its composition as well as in its administrative system.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902)1933 RV2 Yakut RV2
HISTORICAL SIBERIA RR2



HS 631 175 Y 631 175

In 1687 the Ilimsk district (*ouyesd*) which occupied the portage between the Lena and Yenissei Rivers, was added to Yakutsk, but Yakutsk continued to have a separate governor. The governmental reforms of Peter the Great (1708) again detached Ilimsk as a separate town. With the reorganization of the Siberian government in 1727, the independence of Ilimsk was again maintained. However, in 1775, with the division of the Irkutsk Government into provinces, the Ilimsk District was again included in Yakutsk Province, but soon after, in 1783, the Irkutsk Government was reorganized into a vice-royalty divided into three provinces, and Ilimsk, in accordance with this division, was separated from Yakutsk and ultimately annexed to Irkutsk Province.

In 1732, according to Bering's proposal, a coastal strip of land was cut from the Yakutsk District, and together with Kamchatka formed a separate Okhotsk District, which was reorganized in 1822 into a separate Primorskoye (coastal) Government. In 1849 the latter was abolished and the Okhotsk country was, for several years, again linked to Yakutsk Province, but in 1858 it was included in Primorskoye Province, which was formed of lands annexed from China.

Some changes have taken place in the southern borderland of Yakutsk Province. In the beginning of the twentieth century the Olekma-Vitimsky gold mining district was detached from it and joined to Irkutsk Province, but in 1922 the part of this territory to the north of the mouth of the Vitim River was again attached to Yakutsk Province, and called a republic. With this republic was included, on the extreme northwest, the corner formed by the Polar Sea and the Anabara and Khatanga Rivers.

Such were the most important changes in the composition of the Yakutsk territory from the seventeenth century to the present.

No less significant changes occurred in the administrative organization of the Yakut country. In the seventeenth century Yakutsk was the center of a great independent country directly subordinate to Moscow, although for some specific questions it was dependent on the governors of Tobolsk. In the time of Peter the Great, Yakutsk entered into the newly organized Siberian *Goubernyia* (government) and with the division of the Siberian government into provinces was included in Irkutsk Province. In 1775 Irkutsk Province was organised into a government and the Yakut country formed one of the provinces of the new government. In 1783 the government was again reorganized into a vice-royalty composed of four provinces, one of which was Yakutsk Province. In 1797 the vice-royalty was abolished and the government restored. In

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902)1933 RV2 Yakut RV2
HISTORICAL SIBERIA RR2



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1805 under the Emperor Alexander I, the Yakut country was made a separate province dependent upon Irkutsk. In 1852 the Yakut country was given a separate governor. After the revolution in February, 1917, a commissar was appointed by the Provisional Government. In 1919, after two years of bloody civil war, a Soviet regime was established and finally in 1922 the Yakut Country was proclaimed an Autonomous Republic.

9: Stadling--88-89 E-3 (1898) 1901 Yakut
116, 621, 631, 651

"The Yakuts live in groups, scattered here and there in the forests or on the tundras, each family living in a yurta, or, if on the tundra, in tents. If they were evenly distributed over the whole country, each family or yurta would dispose of an area of nearly twenty-eight square miles. But the Yakuts, as we have mentioned above, prefer settling in groups, where there is plenty of pasture, or in the neighbourhood of lakes and rivers abounding with fish, or in forests where game is to be had. Such groups or communities are called aga-usa ('paternal-families' [89] or relations). The members of these communities of relatives do not marry within the community, but they keep together to help and protect each other. They elect an 'elder' and form a council, which decides their common affairs, settles disputes, etc. These communities in their turn associate themselves into larger groups, forming the so-called naslegi (association of family communities), which again are organised into ulus, corresponding to the Russian village-districts (volost). At the head of the ulus stands the golova or chief, with an upràva or kind of police-court. The naslegi are administered by a district-council and a district-elder having the title of kujas (prince), which was conferred on these tribal chiefs by Catherine II. The taxes are collected by the local authorities of the ulus, which are by law connected with the officials of the imperial treasury and the police authorities. The taxes (Yassak) were formerly paid in the shape of furs, but the sable having to a great extent been exterminated, they are now paid in money, the amount of which, plus communal taxes, varies between 12 and 50 shillings per tributary 'soul', depending on the decision of the local authorities and the economical condition of the tax-payer."

11: Lansdell--294-295 M-3 (1879) 1882 Yakut-1-2
116 131, 631

"The province of Yakutsk is the largest in Siberia, and covers an area of no less than a million and a half of square miles, and is therefore nearly as large as the whole of Europe, omitting Russia.* The total population of this enormous province is 235,000, --

* It is bounded on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the west by the Yeneseisk, and on the east by the Sea-coast provinces; whilst on its south lie the three provinces of Irkutsk, Trans-Baikal, and the Amur. The northern and western portions of the province are flat, but towards the south and south-east are the Yablonoi and Stanovoi mountain ranges, continuations, in a north-easterly direction, of the mighty Altai chain. The great river of the province is the Lena, whose waters are drained from an area of 800,000 square miles. From the slopes on the western side of Baikal its upper portion runs in a north-easterly direction as far as Yakutsk, after which the Lower Lena runs due north to the Arctic Ocean. The total length of the river is about 2,500 miles, with a fall of 3,000 feet. East of the Lower Lena are the rivers Yana, Indigirka, and Kolima, all of which are navigable and of considerable size, though small by comparison with their gigantic sister.

that is to say, it has about one-seventh part of an inhabitant to each square mile. The yearly number of marriages is 5,000, and the births 12,000. The Russian town population in 1876 numbered about 2,000, and the [295] country population 5,000; of which there were hereditary nobles, 100; personal nobles, 450; ecclesiastical persons, 600; military, 1,700; and the rest, upwards of 220,000, were natives--that is to say, Tunguses, Yukaghirs, and Yakutes. The natives are divided into communities, under golovahs, or mayors, of their own race, who are, however, subject to the Russian authorities. The province is divided into five uyezds."

12: Galitzin -- 144 [2] N-2 (no date) 1853 Yakut
116, 104, 162, 631, 622, 666

"As wealth among the Yacoutes consists in numerous flocks, from this circumstance it follows that they take care to live dispersed in small groups of two or three yourtes, so as to have at hand sufficient pasturages. A certain number of these little villages form a notchlegh, administered by a kniazetz or small prince. Several notchelghi compose an oulouse, which is governed by a golova; these different functions are elective. The inhabitants of a notchlegh call themselves tjonobout, or of the same kind. When they make an election, each elector depostis his vote in a box divided in as many compartments as there are candidates; then the votes are counted, and the candidate who has obtained the largest number is proclaimed. Besides, it is always in the power of the governed to depose the chief with whom they are dissatisfied, in order to proceed to a new election. The district of Yakoutsk contains six oulouses, with a population of about 40,000: there are, besides about 30,000 Yacoutes settled in the government of Yeninseisk and in other parts of Siberia."

17: Erman-- 273-274 N-3 (1828-29) 1850 Yakut-1-2
116, 115, 622, 631, 177.63 Russia
636.63

"In Ulakhansk, sixty-one versts from Toyon aruin, I met in the yard where we alighted a noble chieftain of the Yakuts, who was on his way to a judicial inquiry. He was distinguished from the rest of his countrymen by superior stature, for the Yakuts, though broad-shouldered and very strong-boned, are collectively not above the middle size. He was also in good case, as befits, according to the ideas of the Yakuts, those who are well off; for the adage says, 'To eat much meat and to grown fat upon it, is the highest destiny of men.' I admired this man's frock, made of blue cloth with red facings and white metal buttons; it had an old-fashioned European look, and was, doubtless, made in imitation of some suit of honour presented to one of his predecessors by the Tsar. He gave me to understand, however, with national pride, that his genuine Yakutian cap was better worth looking at and more valuable also. It was lined with squirrel-skins, and outside was very artificially made up of sable, otter, and black fox furs; it had, moreover, very odd-looking appendages made of the fur of the glutton, which hung down over his back.

This chief's feelings respecting the dignity of his nation, and above all, of his own dignity, displayed themselves throughout all his conversation, which he carried on in broken Russian. --Thus, he always named Yakutsk 'the city of the Yakuts;' and he congratulated me on my prospect of soon visiting its rich yurts. He told me that the administration of justice, and the general internal management of society among the

17: Erman--273-274 N-3 (1828-29) 1850 Yakut-2
116, 115, 622, 631, 177.63 Russia
636.63

Yakuts, are still left in their hands. Their immediate chiefs and magistrates are still of their own nation, . . . The whole race has been divided, from time immemorial, into certain tribes; each of which is again distributed into Ulúsi, [RCH: the Ulus is a sub-tribe] or communes. The heads of the latter are chosen by the Yakuts, from the chief families, for life. They are called Toyoni; which [274] the Russians very properly translate by Knyás or prince. But it is extremely unbecoming, on the other hand, to put these nobles and other heads of tribes on an equal footing with the mayor of a Russian village, and so entitle them merely gólova! These principal dignitaries remain in office only three years; the Yakuts always choose them from the number of their acknowledged princes, and they are therefore not inferior, certainly, to a Russian governor; and, particularly, because the charge of public administration among the Yakuts is defrayed by that people themselves. When he and other Toyoni required cattle on the road for an official journey, they levied them not on the Russians, but on their own people."

24: Wrangell--39 [2] G-3 (1820-23) 1842 Yakut
116, 615, 631, 756

"Every tribe of Jakuti is divided into several nasèlji, each of which is under a knäsez or chief, by whom minor disputes, &c., are settled. More serious cases go before the golowa or superintendent of the whole tribe, who is elected from among the knäsez. The people often call in a schaman or conjuror, and have recourse to his incantations to recover a strayed cow, to cure a sick person, or to obtain good weather for a journey, &c., &c. "

53:Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
RV2 Yakut RV2



number of (ecclesiastical) books were published in Yakut. After the 1905 revolution, artistic and journalistic literature in Yakut began to appear.

Nevertheless, education remained on a low level among the broad Yakut masses. There were no Yakut national schools. Russian church and state schools began to appear in Yakutiya in the 18th century, but there were very few of them. Even in the early 1900's, there were only 11 rural primary schools in all of Yakutiya, and 57 parish and literacy schools. The masses had little access to these schools, and still less to the secondary schools; there were only 5 of these, and they were located only in cities. Of the Yakuts, it was mainly the children of toyons who could get into them.

Nevertheless, even at the end of the 19th century, a small Yakut intelligentsia began to appear—teachers, officials, lawyers and doctors, who had chiefly received education at Tomsk University. From among this intelligentsia there emerged individual amateurs of local history and folklore—the first Yakut ethnographers and collectors. But by their class affiliation and ideology, these first Yakut intellectuals were inclined to the toyon camp, and were infected with nationalism. Alongside this bourgeois-toyon intelligentsia, there appeared in the last years preceding the October Revolution, under the influence of Social-Democratic and Bolshevist propaganda by political exiles (particularly in the circle led by Yemelyan Yaroslavskiy), a small nucleus of progressive Russian cultural workers.

## Socialist Reconstruction

### Formation of Yakut ASSR

In Yakutiya, just as throughout the country, the establishment of the Soviet regime involved a fierce struggle against internal and external enemies. In the autumn of 1918 power was seized in Yakutsk by the followers of Kolchak with the help of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries.[6] Hardly had the Yakutsk workers had time to overthrow the counterrevolutionary regime of Kolchak (December 15, 1919) when there flared up, particularly in the autumn of 1921, the kulak and White Guard revolts, led by tsarist officers and Yakut toyons who had been hiding in the remoter areas.

On February 16, 1922, the Presidium of the VTsIK (All-Union Central Executive Committee) adopted a resolution on the formation of the Yakut ASSR. On April 27, 1922, the Presidium, with M. I. Kalinin in the chair, reviewed this question again and decreed as follows: "To form a Yakut Autonomous Soviet Republic as a federal part of the RSFSR with its administrative center in Yakutsk."

In the autumn of 1922 the young Yakut Republic was faced with a serious threat: the American and Japanese imperialists had moved up General Pepelyayev's troops into Yakutya from Manchuria. The General received half a million rubles in gold from the American firm of Olaf Svenson and the British Hudson's Bay Company. The Americans and Japanese equipped Pepelyayev with weapons, ammunition and equipment. Food supplies and weapons were the responsibility of the Japanese

[6] The Mensheviks were a dissident wing of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party (RSDRP), which was also the parent organization of the Communist Party. The Social Revolutionaries (SR's) were moderate agrarian socialists; they participated in the government during the first months after the October Revolution.—Ed.

175 firm Arai Gumi. The Yakut people took up arms in defense of their young
648 Republic. In March 1923, with the help of the Red Army units, General Pepelyayev was crushed.

175 Even while the struggle against the Pepelyayev bands was still at its
631 height, in December 1922 there was held the first All-Yakut Constituent Assembly of Soviets; this conference elected a Central Executive Committee and Council of People's Commissars of the YaASSR. In 1923 the Constitution of the YaASSR was adopted at the Third All-Yakut Congress of Soviets. In 1937 a new Yakutiyan Constitution was drafted and on March 9 of the same year it was adopted.

## Industry and Transportation

433 During the Five-Year Plans a major socialist industry was developed in Yakutiya. At the present time, in addition to the gold, nonferrous metal and mica industries, there are coal, shipbuilding, building-materials, printing and also fish and dairy industries in Yakutiya.

316 Gold was first mined in the regions bordering on Yakutiya (Vitim and Olekma Basins) more than 100 years ago. But in Yakutiya itself the gold was only mined in very small quantities. In 1923 a prospecting party fitted out by the Yakutiyan government, with the help of Yakut guides, discovered the huge gold deposits on the river Aldan. The Aldan immediately became a major gold-mining area. All around the Aldan there arose settlements, mines, and power stations. At the present time the Aldan mines use powerful electrodredges, conveyors, compressors, excavators and haulage machinery.

[317] The salt reserves of Kempendey along the tributary of the Vilyuy are being exploited on a wide scale.

Extensive prospecting has resulted in the discovery of dozens of new coal deposits. There is now a coal industry in Yakutiya. An example of the rapid development of the coal industry in Yakutiya is the Sangarskiy area. Gold was first mined in Sangary in 1928. During the first year of the mine's existence only 15 tons of coal were brought up, operations being conducted entirely by hand. Nowadays the mine is a large, well-equipped industrial enterprise. A mechanized system for loading the
[361] coal onto barges has been installed. The construction of houses and cultural facilities on a large scale has begun in the coal-mining regions. Sangary itself has become a miners' settlement and an industrial corner of Yakutiya.

313 Before the advent of the Soviet regime the very rich forest reserves of Yakutiya were hardly touched. The timber rotted where it stood, or else was destroyed by forest fire. At the present time forestry is a leading branch of the Yakut economy. Advanced Soviet machinery is used on a wide scale at the lumber camps. There are mobile power stations, and electric saws with power units. The forestry organizations have been provided with dozens of hauling tractors and trucks. Fully mechanized sectors have been set up. The timer is floated downriver by means of mechanical traction. Sawmills have been built.

47 Hundreds of industrial plants have been set up in Yakutiya during the
178 Soviet period. The manufacture of glass, bricks, building materials, refractory materials, furniture, leatherwares and footwear, provides for local needs.

433 In accordance with the planned development of the economy the Yakut
184 region has been divided up into specialized regions—coal mining in the

55:Popov E-5 (no date) 1964 RV2 Yakut RV2
Dolgan

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Setting bait for foxes. "Victory" collective farm, Khatangskiy Rayon, Taymyr National Okrug.

become common. The art of dancing was practically unknown to the Dolgans. Like the Evenks, they only had rounds (with the refrain "kheyro") in which the men and women went round and round, leading each other by the arm and stamping on the ground. 534 535 171

The graphic art of the Dolgans was of an applied nature. Both festive and ordinary clothing was richly ornamented with beads or appliquéd with narrow strips of colored material. Patterned embroidery with deerhair on suede dyed red with an infusion of alder bark or ochre, or dyed black with graphite, was common. Also to be found was fine openwork embroidery with tendon thread on the straps and belts of the reindeer harness. Decorating the clothing was a job of the women. The men mainly engaged in mammoth-ivory carving. They acquired a particularly high degree of skill in carving cheek-plates for the reindeer halter. Tin-inlaid fronts for reindeer saddles and knife handles were also found. The smiths were considered to be very skilled at inlaying iron objects with copper and silver. The runners and backs of light, low sleds common in the Khatangskiy Rayon show an intriguing range of colors. Dolgan designs for the most part are geometric; they consist of combinations of crosses, semicircles, zigzags and broken lines. Wood-carving of a religious nature was also commonly found. The representations were usually very symbolic. 531 294 321 326 331 322

## The Post–Revolutionary Period in the Life of the Dolgans

[In 1926, there were already 17 cooperative stores in the Dolgan territory. In 1931, the former clan Soviets were changed over and replaced by territorial nomadic Soviets, which went to make up the Taymyr Dolgan-Nennish National Okrug. 631 443

[Collectivization of the Dolgans was begun in 1930–31 and completed in 1938. The Dolgan collective farms have collectivized reindeer herds, lines of permanent polar-fox traps, supplies of portable steel springtraps, firearms for hunting and protection of the herds, seines and vertical nets, reindeer harness, sleds, buildings, and special Arctic clothing. The 474 233 234